

Home Reading.

Song from "The Virgin Widow."
The last year's leaf, its time is brief
Upon the beechen spray;
The green bud springs, the young bird sings,
Old leaf, make room for May:
Begone, fly away,
Make room for May.

Oh, green bud, smile on me awhile,
Oh, young bird, let me stay—
What joy have we, old leaf, in thee?
Make room, make room for May:
Begone, fly away,
Make room for May.

—Sir Henry Taylor.

Jack.

"A morning like this, with the sun shining, and the birds singing and down there, does seem to chirp on up mightily," said Mrs. Zib, flitting her apron vigorously. "It's a pity now you ain't able to be up and get a peek at it. It'd do you more good than medicine, 'cording to my notion. There's a lot of folks gone by already, the kind that as little to do. Well, if I ever!" and Mrs. Zib's poke bonnet and the edge of her sharp nose seemed in imminent danger of going through the shutter, she was so inquisitively eager in her inspection of some passer-by.

"It's that Hoke boy," she said presently, withdrawing her head and proceeding to set in order the vials on the stand. "I declare he is a shaver to be driving his own pony, a black one with a bald face, and a—what do you call it—dog-cart! I don't see why there's any need of giving a decent wagon such an outlandish name. He ain't more than eight years old, in sure, and is about as sassy as they make 'em, but then some folks are able to be all sorts of fol-de-rols for their children, and others are put to their wits' ends to get bread for theirs, and you can't be feelin' that lots is various. Some do seem to get all the plums in the pudding, and others can't even get a whiff at the crust. It's queer, but I suppose it's right."

She gave me an interrogative glance as she spoke, then, spying some uneasiness in the little week-old morsel of humanity who was cuddled in my arms, she took him away and sat down with him in the low rocker. "You folks make an awful fuss over him," she said meditatively, "not that he is anything out of the ordinary run either as I can see, but somehow you seem to think he's wonderful. S'posin' now you had felt bad about his coming, not knowing how he could be fed or clothed, and s'posin' nobody kissed or cuddled him, and wondered whether he looked like you or his father or his grandpapa, and all the rest of 'em?"

"Mrs. Zib, please hand me that baby right away. I want to kiss him." "I ain't going to do any such thing," said nurse, peremptorily. "He's just been fooled with enough this morning. All them big girls in the family had to have their foolishness over him before they went to school, and I ain't counted how many times you've kissed him. He'll take it easy enough on my lap a while. Yeller, ain't he? Well, that's the jaunders; it makes 'em sleepy too. I once saw a baby just as likely for his age as this one, but laws he was blinkin' and winkin' away in a miserable sort of a shanty, and nobody seemed to want him in the world very much; he was one of them kind that never gets a whiff at the pudding. He belonged to the Briggs—Dan and Melindy—and the belongin' to them wasn't much of a blessing, for they were two of the shiftless, slack, always behind-hand sort of people who never seem to know how to take care of themselves rightly. Their folks had always been just so, too, a workin' a little on other folks' land, doing an odd job now and then, keepin' in victuals and shabby clothes somehow, the women gettin' cold vittles when they washed for the farmers' wives, and some of the old clothes it wa'n't no use to make over. Dan, however, was the very cream of the hull, so far as slack-handedness and downright laziness was concerned. It wa'n't no trouble for him to do nothin', and never troubled his conscience neither, though perhaps he didn't have one to trouble. Sometimes he'd get a job in harvest or plantin' time, but generally folks were shy about hiring him; nobody likes to pay a man for settin' and drummin' his heels agin the fence, or stoppin' to talk to everybody who happens to go by. The women folks said he was a heavy hand, too, on the butter and the meat. He was a great one to go gunning; you'd see him slouchin' along regular, two mazy, ribby bounds a followin' after; such folks must keep a dog, you know, even if they hain't nothin' for themselves."

"Melindy used to say sometimes that she wished Dan was a little steeper at his work, but if you went to blaming him she always had some excuse for him. He had a pain in his side, or the Squire wanted him to work too hard, or he had to take care of the baby."

"There always was a baby in the house; a little half-dressed, generally miserable creature, for they never got the right kind of care, and wa'n't made the least mite of, though Dan and Melindy liked them in their way. I can't even say that it was curious the little things died off one after another, but it did seem to me fortunate, for there wa'n't no gainsaying but what they were better off out of the world than in it. Jack though, he toughed it out, though he had all the drawbacks the others had, and grew to be a little black-eyed youngster hanging on to Melindy's torn skirts, trottin' round after Dan, or lying in the sun and sand alongside them underable dogs."

"Melindy went when the seventh baby came, and she and the child were buried together, and you wouldn't hardly think it but one day when one of my boys went past the place where she was buried, if there wa'n't that forlorn little Jack a walking round and round it, and pipping 'Mummy, mummy!'"

"Misfortunes never come single, they say, and I believe it, and to prove it Dan's gun went off all of a sudden one day when he was climbing a fence, and somebody found him the same day lying there clean shot thro' the heart. After he was decently buried no one knew what to do with Jack. It wa'n't to be thought

of that anybody around should want him, and the only way seemed to be to send him to the poor-house. I remember he sat out on a big stone in the yard, hiding his face from everybody in his torn jacket sleeve, and crying for the dog that Squire Jones had took away 'cause he said it was a good bird-dog, and somebody or other hushed him up quite sharp when he called for 'Pappy'."

"Old Mrs. Fox asked me if I didn't feel to take him, but I didn't mean to fly in the face of Providence by taking that child when I had tough work to keep my own. So Jack went to the poor-house. I'm sure we have to pay taxes to keep it going, and its fair somebody should be sent there once in a while."

"Do you know the Broneses? No? Well that's curious for they live only a matter of four miles away. Likely as not you've heard enough of them to know they are awful close, but I'm free to say that of all stingy, scraping, rich creatures they are the very best. I was sent for to come and nurse Tom's wife when she had her baby a couple of years ago. Tom came over beforehand to strike a bargain with me, tried to tell me the work would be light with Samantha, her niece, there, and asked me right out to take off a couple of dollars in my price. But I knew the Broneses and they knew me, and I went for my regular wages or not at all. You see there is a great deal to do on a large farm like theirs, and they expected me to be busy every minute."

"I often wondered when I was there what was the use of having money if you couldn't enjoy it. They certainly didn't seem to get any good, so to speak, out of theirs. Their very table was mean, mean for them who could afford better—sour rye bread, rusty pork, and the small potatoes they couldn't sell. Though they had a big lot of poultry, none of it ever came on their table, neither did eggs or such, for everything that would fetch a copper went to market, and if they lived like that you can think what sort of vittles Jack got! Yes, Jack, for I found Dan Briggs' Jack there."

"You see the first night when I see that tall, shamblin' creature shufflin' in with his head droppin' forrards I mistrusted that I'd seen him somewhere before, and I watched him while he eat his bread crusts and cold potatoes, and after he'd gone out I asked Samantha, 'Who's he?'"

"Jack," she says.

"Jack what?"

"Jack Briggs."

"And then I had it sure enough. 'Tom got him out of the poor-house a spell ago,' she said sharply; 'he's half a fool, I hate him.'"

"Well, I wouldn't blame any one for being half a fool living on such food as they gave him. Fat edges of pork with no meat on them, cold potatoes, and bread left to get hard and dry so he couldn't eat so much of it. Bless you, child, I'm not lying; I'm telling downright truth; I've seen Christian folks more than once play that trick on their dired folks."

"I spoke to him the next morning as he was washing outside on the bench. I knew your folks once," says I.

"Eh," said he, looking at me with those dull black eyes o' hisn.

"Yes, and I knew you when you was little fellow; you've grown considerable since. How did you get along at the poor-house?"

"I had fits sometimes, and they bugged me sometimes."

"You don't say so," says I. "How long have you been here?"

"Quite a spell."

"You look kind of peaked and yellor," says I; "don't you feel well?"

"He stared hard at me and real tears came to his eyes. 'I've lots of pain here,' he said, putting his hand to his side, 'and my head hurts sometimes!'"

"Four days after I went there, Jane, that's Tom's wife, got word that her father and mother were coming down to see the new baby and spend the day. She was mightily flustered when she heard it, for she hadn't a bit of pie or cake in the house, and she wanted me to make some. She said tho' it must be apple pie and a cake that wouldn't take more than an egg or two, and but little butter, say a tablespoonful. I concluded to make it as best suited me, seeing I had a fair flake, Samantha having gone to the village; and tho' Jane's bed-room opened into the kitchen, her bed stood so she could not see the part of the room where I was at work. All the same, she made her tongue do duty for her eyes, and kept telling me what to do all the time till I'd lost patience, but you may be sure I mixed things my own way. No stale dripping out of the old yellow bowl in the buttry went into my pie-crust, but I put in it good, sweet lard out of the firkin in the cellar, and I didn't sweeten them pies with molasses sugar either, but good granulated went into them."

"Then I began with the cake she called out. I guess after all it had best be molasses; that only takes one egg, and shortening instead of butter."

"Well," says I, smiling to myself as I stirred up a good cake, which had plenty of eggs and butter in it for once. Her speaking of molasses cake tho' put it in my mind to bake a nice, soft one, for molasses cake when fresh ain't to be sneered at. Yes, and I meant to tell you that I made a pie in an oldish saucer, made it thick and good and sweetened it with molasses, and after it was baked I tucked it away in the wood-shed. After dinner I looked to see if Jack had a piece of the pie he had cut and that Jane had grumbled over because it was too good. But Samantha didn't give him any, which was just what I expected. So I left Samantha busy with the dishes, and tucking that saucer pie under my apron I went down in the yard alongside the barn to look at some blankets I'd hung out to see Jack morning. I looked sharp to see Jack when he came along to go to the meadow, and then I called him soft like. 'What?' he says, stopping short."

"Here," says I, "take this and go set down in the gate corner and eat it. I'll wait for the dish."

"It wa'n't three minutes before he brought the saucer back, every crumb clean gone. 'I'll never forget it,' says he a crying."

"It was the next day the old folks came. I baked good, sweet bread in the morn-

ing and cut it fresh for dinner too, though Jane was hurt about it, and what with ham and decently washed potatoes, chopped cabbage, and the sugared pie we had a good dinner everybody enjoyed, especially Tom, who couldn't stop bragging about it. But I had a plan in my mind, so after we'd finished I says to Samantha, 'You're tired so you go set in Jane's room and hold the baby and talk to Granny, and I'll wash up the things.' She wa'n't backward to accept, and Tom took the old man out to see the farm, and for once in his miserable life I set Jack down to a decent meal. Nothing was sneaked off that table by me, and it gave me solid satisfaction to see him eat. Samantha screamed right out when she came in, and saw him finishing the pie. 'Ain't you ashamed to let him make a hog of himself?' she cried. But I reckon I set her down sharp for once."

"What did you ask me just now? How they spent their evenings there? Well, how do you suppose? Like you folks: going in the parlor and lighting it up bright, and talking and reading and playing? I rather guess not. You don't think they would ever set in their parlor, do you? If you do, you don't know them."

"They sot in the kitchen, burned one candle and kind of grumbled when they felt like it. I most always sot in by Jane and the baby; our light came in from the kitchen, for she wouldn't burn an extra candle for herself. She was always hinting at something I might do evenings, but I let her hint. Sometimes Jack came in, fearful, like a dog not sure of its place, and sot down for a spell by the door before he went to bed in the loft over the out-kitchen, but Samantha was always finding fault and picking at him. One night he came up by the table and asked for a needle and thread to fix his jacket, but she never pretended to hear him. I was clean put out with such meanness. 'Jack,' says I, 'hand me that jacket,' and I got my housewife, and put on my specs and sot down to darn it."

"It's a dirty, miserable thing," says I, a working away. 'It ought to go to the rag-bag, and Tom ought to get you a decent suit.'"

"Tom's chair came down hard, and he looked mad enough. 'Better dress a beggar in broadcloth,' he growled."

"Oh, no need of that," says I, 'only give a man working for vittles and clothes decent ones.'"

"I know my own business, and I hate meddlers," says Tom. 'Here, Jack, clear out to bed.'"

"Of all the queer questions Jack would ask, though! 'One day he says to me, 'What's God?'"

"You poor creature," says I, 'ain't no minister ever told you? Well, he's a sperrit.'"

"What's a sperrit?" says he.

"Now, I'm one that's satisfied with facts without prying into 'em. I never muddle myself a wondering, but I see by his questions he was stupid like, so I says, 'A sperrit is something that ain't flesh and blood.'"

"He shook his head backwards and forwards. 'Where's God?'"

"Why, in Heaven, you poor heathen. He looked as if he was 'most a cryin'. 'If he was only down here I might find him,' he says, as serious like as might be, 'but I can't never find him up there.'"

"Twa'n't no use for me to say more to him, you see; he showed he was lacking, and I wa'n't no minister. Another time, when I was by the well, he came along to fill the water-jug to take to the field. 'I'm a thinkin', Miss Zib,' he growled."

"What about?"

"Thinkin' if I got away to the edge of the world, would I fall off?"

"Of course," says I.

"Full where?"

"The Lord knows," I says, a little sharp, for his silly questions pestered me. I did kind of wonder tho' to myself where a body fallin' off the world would land; but I ain't a scholar and don't pretend to say, besides, I never expect to travel to the world's edge, myself."

"It was that very afternoon Tom came in the kitchen in considerable of a hurry. 'Where's the Tobias liniment?' he asked Jane, who was sitting there holding the baby."

"In the right hand corner of the second closet shelf. What do you want to do with it?"

"Jack fell off the mow and got hurt. 'What did he want to do that for? Now, don't waste that liniment on him for nothin'!"

"Guess I'll go see if he's much hurt," says I, thinkin' a fall from a mow wa'n't no trifle."

"I found him all on a heap on the barn floor, and what was worse, he didn't know anything."

"That's a high mow," says I, measuring it with my eye, 'and how in heaven's name do you know where he's hurt and wants to be rubbed with liniment. The best thing you can do is to get a doctor.'"

"I want to get another load in before it rains," says Tom, in that aggravatin' slow way o' hisn, 'and it's no use runnin' up doctor's bills when taint no need. The Tobias cured the old mare's leg last week, and by an' by, when he comes to, we'll find out where he ails.'"

"Tom Brones," says I, 'I feel good telling you you are the meanest man a living. Look at that poor thing there! It ain't enough you've starved and worked him to death, but you are going to let him die like a dog. I'm going to get Sam Demarest to go for a doctor.'"

"Hold on, you long-tongued Jezebel," says he, 'and stop your meddlin'. I'll go for the doctor myself, and with that he went to work saddling a horse, grumblin' and swearin' to himself, and to me, for that matter, but I was trying to fix Jack a little more comfortably, and never minded him."

"Samantha came up and looked in and screamed a little, and went away again. Bull, the dog, came and smelled of him, and whined; for the dog always took to Jack, but nothing roused him; he breathed heavy and looked bad."

"It seemed an age before Tom came back. He was slow always, and I needn't have expected he would put himself out of the way for Jack."

"The doctor seemed to think something pretty serious was the matter with Jack. He worked over him quite a spell; examining, listening, growing graver

every moment. He tore away his poor rags, even clipped away some of his shock of hair. Then he shook his head; 'I can't do anything for him now.'"

"An hour after it was all over. Neighbors, hearing the news, came in and stood around, but Jack never knew one of them; never knew when I helped put bandages on his head; and his hair was so pretty, thick, and brown, and with a curly wave into it!"

"Jane grumbled some when we told her he was dead. He was a poor, miserable creature, not worth his salt, she said, but bird folks was scarce just now in harvest, and asked such ridiculous wages. The town would have to pay for his coffin, though, and was that Tobias liniment left wastin' in the barn?"

"It was the next day Mr. Somers, the old Methodist minister, came to the house and made a prayer over him. Actually, the first prayer I believe, ever made by anybody on his account; and Tom and two or three of the neighbors took him up to the wood-lot to bury him. Jane had to come to it, and let one of Tom's white shirts be put onto him; it wa'n't one of the newest, and really he looked as peaceful and calm as any baby could, and he wa'n't bad looking, seen so, and I was glad to remember that I had been kind to him in them little ways I told you of."

"I just thought the last Sunday I was there that I'd put on my bonnet and go see where they'd laid him, so without sayin' anything I tramped up there. It was a wild place enough, and of course there wa'n't nothing to mark it; but the Lord will know where he sleeps at the last day, and that is enough, ain't it?"

"I kind o' wondered when I stood there what had become of his soul. He was such a white heathen. It made me think of a beautiful sermon I once heard our old Dominie preach, 'No man cared for my soul,' or some text most like it, and it did seem to me all of a sudden as if no man had cared for Jack."

"But I guess I had better put this little fellow down by you now, for he's sound asleep, and I can go down and see why nobody has brought them lemons yet. Tut, tut—don't look so down. I meant to chirp you up a talking!"

"Chirp me up? Oh, Mrs. Zib."

—Margaret H. Eckerson.

THE WRONG SISTER.—At a recent dinner party there were two sisters present, one a widow who had just emerged from her weeds, the other not long married, whose husband had lately gone to India for a short term. A young lawyer present was deputed to take the young lady in to dinner. Unfortunately, he was under the impression that his partner was the married lady whose husband had just arrived in India. The conversation between them commenced by the lady remarking how warm it was for the season of the year. "Yes, it is quite warm," replied the lawyer. Then a happy thought suggested itself to him, but he added, with a cheerful smile, "but not as hot as the place to which your husband has gone." The look with which the lady answered this lively sally will haunt that unhappy man till his death.

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MUSIC BY

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General Admission 50 Cents,

Reserved Seats 75 Cents.

Tickets for sale at J. P. Scherff's Drug Store and by the Members of the Band.

PROGRAMME

1. June March, Müller.
2. Tom's Little Star, or the Art and the Woman, Foster.
3. Money Musk, Benj. F. Taylor.
4. Flowers of St. Petersburg Waltzes, Resch.
5. Scene from Mary Stuart, Schiller.
6. Feeding the Black Follies, Anon.
7. Overture, Bohemian Girl, Balfe.
8. Sam's Little Girl, Anon.
9. Gavotte, Secret Love, Resch.
10. Too Late for the Train, Rob. J. Burdette.

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MR. GEORGE ROUBAUD, Second Violin.

MR. E. W. MORRIS, Flute.

MR. JARVIS PELOUBET, Clarinet.

MR. L. G. PELOUBET, First Cornet.

MR. W. S. PELOUBET, Second Cornet.

MR. T. W. LANGSTROTH, JR., Baritone.

MR. ROBERT DODD, Bass.

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